Monique Schoenfeld

**Muralist Guillermo Aranda prepared paints for student volunteers this morning as restoration work began on a vandalized mural at Amesti Elementary School.**

# Restoration begins on vandalized mural

By EMILIO ALVARADO
STAFF WRITER

Students usually greet the start of the school year with a mournful groan and a willingness to trade in Christmas for a couple of extra days of summer vacation. Not so for about a dozen students at Amesti Elementary School who cut their summer vacation short to repaint a mural at their school after it was damaged by vandals.

The students showed up at the school Monday – two weeks before the official start of school – and began work on the mural, said principal Mathide Rand. Last spring students painted the mural with the help of local artist Guillermo Aranda, a prolific muralist who has led numerous mural projects at area schools.

Three weekends ago vandals hit the school and scribbled graffiti on windows, walls, doors and the mural. The damage to the mural was extensive enough that it needed to be repainted.

Aranda found out about the vandalism and decided to help restore the mural. At first one or two students agreed to help. Then the word spread, and soon about a dozen students had paint brushes ready.

The mural's theme, after all, depicts the different types of communication, Rand said.

The mural, which is on a wall of the computer lab, was a student project from start to finish, she said. Students submitted sketches to Aranda, who combined them to create several ideas for the mural. The students then selected one to the drafts and began the work.

"The kids were so involved in it," Rand said. "They had ownership of it."

The students didn't mind working on the mural because they felt "ownership" of the mural, Rand said. It's this spirit that is often missing in the schools today, she said.

"Ownership in general is what we need in our schools," Rand said.

School officials hope the mural can be completed by the start of school on Aug. 22.